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7. — *The History of Rehoboth, Bristol County, Massachusetts ; comprising a History of the present Towns of Rehoboth, Seekonk, and Pawtucket, from their Settlement to the Present Time ; together with Sketches of Attleborough, Cumberland, and a Part of Swansea and Barrington, to the Time that they were severally separated from the Original Town.* By LEONARD BLISS, JR. 8vo. pp. 294. Boston. Otis, Broaders, & Co. 1836.

OUR local histories have of late years become so numerous, and enlisted in their behalf so much talent and acquirement, that they now constitute a distinct and very important department of our literature. And yet it seems but yesterday, since this field of inquiry was entered upon. It is but one of the many benefits conferred on the country by the Massachusetts Historical Society, that it first pointed out and led the way in this branch of historical investigation. In 1791, the very year of its incorporation, that Society issued a circular letter, addressed extensively to gentlemen of science in the continent and islands of America, requesting a topographical and historical account of the cities and towns in which they respectively resided. This appeal was responded to on all hands, particularly in our own State, and the twenty-five volumes of the Society's Collections contain a vast number of histories thus furnished. The field, too, has in the mean time been cultivated by many voluntary laborers ; so that now there is hardly any considerable town in Massachusetts, we had almost said in New England, that has not its map accurately drawn, and its history fully and faithfully related. Some of these histories, such as Snow's Boston, Felt's Salem and Ipswich, Willis's Portland, Shattuck's Concord, Deane's Scituate, and Thacher's Plymouth, are large and sightly volumes, occupying from three to five hundred pages each. We are happy to be able to announce, that to this class an important addition is soon to be made, by the publication of a history of Worcester, from the pen of that erudite antiquarian, William Lincoln, Esq.

However some may be tempted to smile at the laborious researches of these village chroniclers, yet they furnish invaluable aid to the geographer and the historian. Their very particularity is a guarantee for their general fidelity and accuracy. We can well conceive, with what delight Ebeling would have welcomed the publication of some of these later histories, and what essential service they would have rendered him in the compilation of his great work on the geography of America. They em-

body and preserve many incidents and adventures, which being too minute and local for the general historian, would, but for such a record, be inevitably lost. Yet many of these details exhibit and illustrate the peculiar character of our fathers, and "show the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure." They are the points which will hereafter be taken up by the poet and novelist, and made the themes by which our hill-tops and river-sides will be rendered classic ground. There is hardly one of our ancient towns, that has not its local tradition or romantic legend, its tale of Indian massacre or revolutionary heroism. There is hardly one, that has not produced some distinguished character, or harboured some eccentric personage like Robert the Hermit, mentioned on page 249 of the *History of Rehoboth*. All these vanishing traditions and romantic stories are gathered up by the village chronicler, and preserved as materials for the higher branches of literature; and we doubt not that many of them will hereafter reappear in more elegant forms, and furnish instruction and delight to unborn generations.

With this estimate of their value and use, we are glad to see any addition made to the list of our town histories; and we accordingly give a cordial welcome to the volume which has occasioned this notice, and congratulate the author on the success with which he has delineated the fortunes and fates of his native town. He has investigated its history with remarkable perseverance and fidelity, and has produced a work full of interest, and highly creditable to his talents and taste.

It may not be generally known, that Rehoboth is one of the oldest towns in the Commonwealth, and has many strong and peculiar claims to remembrance. The settlement dates as far back as 1641, when a tract of eight miles square was purchased of the famous Massasoit, the early and steadfast friend of the Pilgrims. The first occupant of the soil was William Blackstone, a clergyman of the Church of England, who, when Governor Winthrop and his company arrived at Charlestown in 1630, was found by them in quiet possession of the peninsula on which Boston now stands. After having cultivated the first garden, and planted the first orchard in Massachusetts, he sold his lands on the peninsula in 1634, and retired into the wilderness, where he took up his solitary abode, and lived in entire seclusion, as he had before done at Boston. He appears to have been a studious and contemplative man, calling his house Study Hall, and a knoll not far from it, which was his favorite place of retirement, Study Hill. Books were the cherished companions of his lonely retreat; and his library of one hundred and eighty volumes, must have been a large one for those days in the wilds of America.

Among these were six Latin books, three in folio, and three in quarto. He died in 1675, near his favorite Study Hill, where two rude stones mark his grave. His name is perpetuated by the river which winds through the beautiful valley and rolls past the site of his lonely dwelling. To every Bostonian these scenes must be classic spots, and his grave may hereafter become a place of pilgrimage. We thank Mr. Bliss for preserving these particulars of our venerable townsman, the first settler and proprietor of Shawmut. His account of Blackstone is remarkably beautiful and touching, and had we space, we should be glad to transfer the whole of it to our pages.

Next after Blackstone, came the celebrated Roger Williams, and pitched his tent for a while at Rehoboth. This was in 1636, after his banishment by the magistrates of Massachusetts. His flight was by water, in the depth of winter. Being soon informed, however, by Governor Winslow of Plymouth, that he was within their jurisdiction, he removed to the other side of the river, and settled on the spot to which he gave the name of Providence.

But the first permanent settler, and the real founder of Rehoboth, was the Rev. Samuel Newman. He was educated at the University of Oxford, and a place is assigned him by Antony Wood among Oxford writers, in his "*Athenæ Oxonienses*." Having been the minister of seven different churches in the land of his nativity, he came over to New-England in 1636 or 1638. After residing some time at Dorchester, and four or five years at Weymouth, where he preached, he emigrated with a majority of his congregation in 1643 to Rehoboth, and lived there the rest of his days. The most remarkable circumstance in the life of Mr. Newman was his spending the long winter evenings, in the American wilderness, in making or revising his celebrated Concordance of the Scriptures, by the light of pine-knots. This Concordance was the third in English, and far surpassed either of its predecessors. It was published in London in 1650, and passed through several editions during his life-time. After his death, an edition of it was published at Cambridge, in England, under the name of the "*Cambridge Concordance*," which title it has ever since borne. Previous to the publication of Cruden's, Newman's was esteemed the best Concordance in the English language.

A town that can reckon among its first settlers three such men as Blackstone, Roger Williams, and Newman, has reason to be proud of its origin. We break off with regret from any further notice of this interesting volume; and while we thank Mr. Bliss for the information and pleasure he has afforded us, and cordially

recommend his work to the notice of our readers, we assure him that we shall be glad to meet him again in a field in which he seems so well qualified to labor.

- 8.—1. *Report of the Managers of the Port Society of the City of Boston and its Vicinity, at its Seventh Annual Meeting, held on the First of February, 1836.* Boston. John H. Eastburn. 8vo. pp. 23.
2. *Third Annual Report of the Seaman's Aid Society, of the City of Boston.* Written by MRS. SARAH J. HALE. Boston. James B. Dow. 12mo. pp. 32.

THE first of these documents is an exceedingly able and interesting pamphlet. It contains a history of the doings in which the Boston Port Society has been directly or indirectly engaged; a consideration of the success which has attended them; an account of the present condition of the seamen of Boston, and an outline of the best methods to be hereafter taken for their improvement.

The following important institutions have been established for the benefit of seamen; the Seamen's Bethel in North Square; the Bethel Reading Room; the Bethel Union; the Bethel Temperance Society; the Bethel Nautical School; the Seaman's Aid Society; and the Savings Bank for Seamen.

These institutions are obviously suited to the exigency of the case, and the managers give us a detail of facts, which show that they have gone into successful operation. The account of the religious services, principally under the direction of the eloquent Mr. Taylor, at the Seamen's Bethel, is beautiful and affecting. It is stated that the Bethel Temperance Society has ninety-three members, and the Bethel Union one hundred and forty-five; and the Savings Bank for Seamen had in January last, \$24,600, deposited for seamen only. These are cheering facts, about which there can be no mistake.

The Report proceeds to consider the present condition of seamen in the port of Boston, which it represents as still deplorably low. The causes of the fact are fully stated. In this part of the discussion a number of startling particulars are produced, and a system of horrible wickedness is unfolded. The facts exhibited in relation to the infamous frauds practised upon seamen by shipping masters and landlords, and the whole crew of atrocious villains, five hundred or more, banded with them, are such as to defy belief, if they were not too well authenticated. The clearness, the cogency, the eloquence of this admirable Report,